WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A computer-implemented method of providing access to information stored in diverse formats, the method comprising:

receiving from an application a semantic request having a request name that semantically identifies a type of information sought by the request;

converting the received semantic request to a generic request having corresponding request parameters;

transmitting the converted request to a data access system;

receiving data from the data access system corresponding to the converted request; and

providing the data to the application.

2.   The computer-implemented method of claim 1, further comprising typecasting the data received from the data access system before providing the data to the application.

3.   The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein the semantic request comprises a uniform resource identifier.

4.   The computer-implemented method of claim 1, further comprising creating an object for receiving and converting the semantic request, opening a database connection corresponding to the semantic request, and requesting properties of data corresponding to the semantic request, if a database connection has not previously been opened.

23   5.   The computer-implemented method of claim 4, wherein the object is a group

24   object configured to access information about groups of of entities.

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26   6.   The computer-implemented method of claim 4, wherein the created object

27   requests the properties of a resource corresponding to the converted request.

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29   7.   The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein the converted request

30   comprises parameters corresponding to, but not present in, the semantic request.

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32   8.   A computer-implemented method of establishing an object for simplifying

33   data access, the method comprising:

34   identifying a generic data access command for communicating with a data access

35   system;

36   creating a semantic data access command that corresponds to the generic data access

37   command; and

38   providing a semantic object configured to receive the semantic data access command

39   from an application, and provide a corresponding generic data access command to a data

40   access system.

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42   9.   The computer-implemented method of claim 8, wherein the semantic data

43   access command comprises a uniform resource identifier.

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45   10.   The computer-implemented method of claim 8, wherein the semantic object is

46   configured to open a database connection corresponding to the semantic data access

47   command and request properties of data corresponding to the semantic data access command,

48   if a database connection has not previously been opened.

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50   11.   The computer-implemented method of claim 8, wherein the generic data

51   access command comprises parameters corresponding to, but not present in, the semantic

52   data access command.

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54   12.   A system for providing simplified access to data stored in diverse formats,

55   comprising:

56   a plurality of user applications configured to receive requests from, and present data

57   to, one or more users of the system;

58   a semantic object that is accessible by one or more of the user applications using a

59   name that semantically suggests the action to be performed by the semantic object, the

60   semantic object producing in response to a request from the one or more user applications, a

61   generic data request having one or more parameters that convey information relating to the

62   request; and

63   a repository system that receives the generic data request and responds to the

64   semantic object with data corresponding to the request.

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66   13.   The system of claim 12, wherein the semantic object type casts the data

67   corresponding to the request to the user application.

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69   14.   The system of claim 13, wherein the semantic object type casts the data

70   corresponding to the request before passing the data to the user application.

15. The system of claim 12, further comprising a semantic object provider configured to give access to prepared semantic objects in response to a request from a user application.

16. The system of claim 15, wherein the semantic object provider accepts additional semantic objects after the system has been established.

17. The system of claim 16, wherein the semantic object provider is configured to access semantic objects over a remote communication link.

18. The system of claim 12, further comprising a portal that provides access to the user applications.

19. An article comprising a machine-readable medium storing instructions operable to cause one or more machines to perform operations comprising:

receiving from an application a semantic request having a request name that semantically identifies a type of information sought by the request;

converting the received semantic request to a generic request having corresponding request parameters;

transmitting the converted request to a data access system;

receiving data from the data access system corresponding to the converted request; and

providing the data to the application.

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96   20.   The article of claim 19, further comprising instructions operable to cause one

97   or more machines to typecast the data received from the data access system before providing

98   the data to the application.

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100   21.   The article of claim 19, wherein the semantic request comprises a uniform

101   resource identifier.

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103   22.   The article of claim 19, further comprising instructions operable to create an

104   object for receiving and converting the semantic request , open a database connection

105   corresponding to the semantic request, and request properties of data corresponding to the

106   semantic request, if a database connection has not previously been opened.

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108   23.   The article of claim 22, wherein the object is a group object configured to

109   access information about groups of of entities.

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111   24.   The article of claim 22, wherein the created object requests the properties of a

112   resource corresponding to the converted request.

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114   25.   The article of claim 19, wherein the converted request comprises parameters

115   corresponding to, but not present in, the semantic request.

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